

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The listing of claims below replaces all prior versions of claims in the application.

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material comprising the steps of:

disposing a powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of  $R^2$ , a fluoride of  $R^3$ , and an oxyfluoride of  $R^4$  wherein  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$  and  $R^4$  each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc on a sintered magnet form of a  $R^1$ -Fe-B composition wherein  $R^1$  is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, said sintered magnet form having a dimension of at least 0.5 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction, and

heat treating the magnet form and the powder at a temperature equal to or below the sintering temperature of the magnet in vacuum or in an inert gas,

wherein said powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of  $R^2$ , a fluoride of  $R^3$ , and an oxyfluoride of  $R^4$  having an average particle size of up to 100  $\mu\text{m}$  is disposed in the surface of the magnet form as a slurry thereof dispersed in an aqueous or organic solvent.

12-18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of up to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

20. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of  $R^2$ , a fluoride of  $R^3$ , and an oxyfluoride of  $R^4$  is present in a magnet-surrounding space within a distance of 1 mm from the surface of the magnet form and at an average filling factor of at least 10%.

21. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of  $R^2$ , a fluoride of  $R^3$ , and an oxyfluoride of  $R^4$  has an average particle size of up to 100  $\mu\text{m}$ .

22. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$  or  $R^4$  contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb.

23. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein a powder comprising a fluoride of  $R^3$  and/or an

oxyfluoride of  $R^4$  is used whereby fluorine is absorbed in the magnet form along with  $R^3$  and/or  $R^4$ .

24. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 23, wherein  $R^3$  and/or  $R^4$  contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb, and the total concentration of Nd and Pr in  $R^3$  and/or  $R^4$  is lower than the total concentration of Nd and Pr in  $R^1$ .

25. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 23, wherein in the powder comprising a fluoride of  $R^3$  and/or an oxyfluoride of  $R^4$ , the fluoride of  $R^3$  and the  $R^4$  oxyfluoride are contained in a total amount of at least 10% by weight, with the balance being one or more members selected from among a carbide, nitride, oxide, hydroxide and hydride of  $R^5$ ,

wherein  $R^5$  is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc.

26. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, further comprising, after the heat treatment, effecting aging treatment at a temperature from 350 °C to a temperature lower than the temperature of the heat treatment.

27. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form is cleaned with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

28. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein a surface layer of the sintered magnet form is removed by shot blasting before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

29. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein cleaning with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents, grinding, or plating or painting is carried out as a final treatment after the heat treatment.

30. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein said sintered magnet has a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side.

31. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of 0.5 to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

32. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated is obtained by compacting and sintering powder of another alloy containing  $R^1$ , Fe and B wherein  $R^1$  is as defined in claim 1, and machining the thus obtained sintered block to a shape having a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

33-42. (Canceled)